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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NORTH KOREAN MISSILE TEST

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage July 6 on North Korea's test-firing of seven missiles, including a long-range Taepodong-2, toward Japan on Tuesday morning.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, editorials in both the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, and the pro-independence, English-language, "Taiwan News" expressed the hope that North Korea's missile test would contribute to Taiwan legislators' review of the U.S. arms procurement bill, since Taiwan also faces a missile threat. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" warned that after the North Korean missile test, the United States might move closer to China, and Taiwan might face a more difficult international situation. An op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, pointed out the problems China faces with North Korea, and added that it is not necessary to worry. End summary.

A) "Hope That DPRK's Missile Test Would Arouse Consciousness of Opposition Parties"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (7/6):

"... The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) missile test reminds us of the missile crises in the Taiwan Strait [during 1995-96]. Perhaps North Korea is just bluffing, but China does have the military capabilities to invade Taiwan. A failed ballistic missile test by the DPRK is seen by the United States and Japan as the greatest crisis to their national security; China's missile test-firing toward Taiwan, however, cannot make opposition parties abandon their disagreements, or pass the U.S. arms procurement bill with the consideration of protecting the lives of 23 million Taiwan people. This is a tragedy of the Taiwan people. Although this is wishful thinking, we still anticipate that North Korea's test-firing of its ballistic missiles would arouse the consciousness of the opposition parties, and make them review the budget for U.S. arms procurements."

B) "PRC Missile Threat Outranks DPRK"

The pro-independence English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] noted in an editorial (7/6):

"... While we certainly oppose any offensive missile testing in our region by any power, it cannot be denied that Pyongyang's actions might have a silver lining for Taiwan in terms of refocusing attention on the fact that we are the target of the greatest regional missile threat.

"The People's Republic of China, which Washington is leaning on heavily to persuade North Korea to come back to talks and cease its

nuclear program, has deployed over 800 medium-range missiles as well as longer-range Dongfeng 31 missiles of far greater potency opposition the Taiwan Strait and aimed directly at our shores in what is undoubtedly a "clear and present danger" to the security of Taiwan. ...

"... At the very least, the pan-Blue camp should ease their boycott against the government's proposal to purchase advanced defensive systems from the United States, including antisubmarine aircraft, conventional submarines and Patriot III-C anti-missiles missiles.

"We should not excessively rely on such defensive systems for our protection, but it would be highly irresponsible for any government to allow our people to face missile threats from China or even North Korea without any defenses whatsoever."

C) "Beware of N. Korea's Military Expansion"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (7/6):

"... Taiwan should be concerned about the missiles tests, too. It is worth noting that, in trying to prevent North Korea from becoming a dire threat to world peace, the international community, especially the United States, will seek to establish closer relations with mainland China, which is the closest ally of North Korea. This could make it even more difficult for Taiwan to cultivate friendships internationally."

D) "North Korea's Missiles Test U.S.-Japan-China Relations"

Lai I-chung, director of the DPP's Chinese Affairs Department, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (7/6):

"...Some people think that China will have more bargaining chips than the United States in the Taiwan Strait, because of the DPRK's nuclear weapons. ... If Beijing is not powerful enough, what kind of bargaining chips does China have with the DPRK that would allow it to demand U.S. concessions in the Taiwan Strait? If Beijing is reluctant to exert its power, it means that China has a fundamental strategic confrontation, the same as it has with the United States and Japan. Beijing thus has to answer Washington's questions regarding its ambiguous role. Since China needs to avoid confronting the United States with regard to the DPRK, how can it use the same issue to pressure the United States? Therefore, Taiwan does not need to make an excessive inference with anxiety; it should design responding strategies based on observations of the situation on the Korean Peninsula."

Young